

California State University, San Bernardino

**CSUSB ScholarWorks**

---

Theses Digitization Project

John M. Pfau Library

---

2007

## Spirituality in the daily lives of African American women

Denise Estell Holmes

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project>



Part of the [Gerontology Commons](#), [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#), and the [Social Work Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Holmes, Denise Estell, "Spirituality in the daily lives of African American women" (2007). *Theses Digitization Project*. 3241.

<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/3241>

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@csusb.edu](mailto:scholarworks@csusb.edu).

SPIRITUALITY IN THE DAILY LIVES OF  
AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

---

A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Social Work

---

by  
Denise Estell Holmes  
September 2007

SPIRITUALITY IN THE DAILY LIVES OF  
AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

---

A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

---

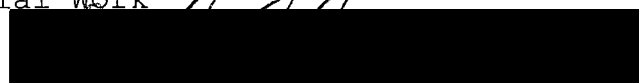
by  
Denise Estell Holmes

September 2007

Approved by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Herb Shon, Faculty Supervisor  
Social Work 

07-25-07  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. David Denson Jr., Pastor,  
Burning Bush Baptist Church

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Rosemary McCaslin,  
M.S.W. Research Coordinator

## ABSTRACT

The mental health field has largely ignored the roles of spirituality and religion in the therapeutic process. Spiritual beliefs have the power to transform and maintain enormous change in one's perceptions, values, and behaviors. Spiritual beliefs can be a personal source of strength in coping with physical, emotional, or environmental stress. This research study was exploratory in nature and used a qualitative approach to learn firsthand from the intimate, personal and subjective experiences of African American women about the importance of spirituality and religiosity in their everyday lives. The study conducted fourteen face-to-face interviews with African American women who are churchgoers and non-churchgoers. The study explored both churchgoers and non-churchgoers in an effort to illustrate the significance of spirituality in the everyday lives of African American women whether they attend religious institutions or not.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Herbert Shon, Faculty Supervisor, and Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, M.S.W. Research Coordinator, for all of their guidance and support in the completion of this study.

## DEDICATION

With much love and appreciation to all the women who have taken this spiritual journey with me. I extend an abundance of gratitude for your love, support and encouragement.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT. . . . .	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	iv
LIST OF TABLES. . . . .	viii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
Problem Statement. . . . .	1
Micro . . . . .	5
Macro . . . . .	6
Social Work Roles . . . . .	8
Purpose of the Study . . . . .	9
Research Design . . . . .	9
Significance of the Project for Social Work . . . . .	11
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
Introduction . . . . .	14
Spirituality Defined . . . . .	14
Spirituality and African American Women. . . . .	17
The Practitioner and the Use of Spirituality with African American Women. . . . .	19
Spiritual Interventions. . . . .	22
Theory Guiding Conceptualization . . . . .	25
Pathology Model. . . . .	25
Afrocentric Model. . . . .	26

Integrated Feminist and Psychodynamic Model. . . . .	26
Relational Model . . . . .	27
Summary. . . . .	28
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	
Introduction . . . . .	29
Study Design . . . . .	29
Sampling . . . . .	31
Data Collection and Instruments. . . . .	32
Procedures . . . . .	34
Protection of Human Subjects . . . . .	36
Data Analysis. . . . .	37
Summary. . . . .	37
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS	
Introduction . . . . .	38
Presentation of the Findings . . . . .	38
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION	
Introduction . . . . .	53
Discussion . . . . .	53
Limitations. . . . .	58
Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research. . . . .	58
Conclusions. . . . .	61
APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE . . . . .	63



APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT. . . . .	65
APPENDIX C: DEBRIEFING STATEMENT. . . . .	67
APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHICS. . . . .	69
REFERENCES. . . . .	71

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants. . . . .	40
Table 2. Participants' Responses to the Role That Spirituality Plays in Handling Life Sorrows. . . . .	44
Table 3. Participants' Responses to the Rituals That Help with Life's Obstacles . . . . .	46

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the importance of (a) studying spirituality in social work, (b) the connection between spirituality and mental health, (c) the need for spirituality to be included in the assessment of African American Women in the therapeutic process, (d) the role of the mental health social worker, and (e) the methodology employed for this study.

#### Problem Statement

The mental health field has largely ignored the roles of spirituality and religious beliefs in the development of the psyche (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). According to Anderson, Worthen and Millison (as cited in Niederman, 1999, Introduction section, para. 4), "spiritual beliefs have the power to transform and maintain enormous changes in one's perceptions, values, and behaviors. Spiritual beliefs can be a personal source of strength in coping with physical, emotional, or environmental stress". There has been a noticeable increase in awareness related to spirituality and mental health.

Sermabeikian (1994) noted that spirituality is a human need; it is essential that it is not misinterpreted, avoided, or seen as a sign of regression, neurosis or some pathology. Social workers need to recognize that a person's values, perceptions, spiritual beliefs, feelings, and ideals are inherently linked to religious, cultural, ethnic, philosophical, and life experiences. It again is essential that social work practitioners recognize that spirituality in a person's life can be a positive way of dealing with life's challenges. In Canda's qualitative study (as cited in Niederman, 1999, Theoretical Framework section, para. 2), "he examined the spirituality of "helpers" across major religious orientations. An area of agreement is the belief in an innate need for humans to search for meaning and purpose in their lives". Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf, and Saunders, (as cited in Niederman, 1999, Theoretical Framework section, para. 2), posit that "a spiritual person has been on a quest for meaning and purpose, and emerges with confidence that life is deeply meaningful and that his or her own existence has purpose".

According to Corrington et al., (as cited in Niederman, 1999, Statement of Problem section, para. 1) "a

number of studies cited in professional journals of social work, nursing, psychology, psychiatry, and medicine all show a positive correlation between spirituality and mental/physical health".

The significance of spirituality to Americans is demonstrated by the latest outcomes of a national study. In response to the question, How important would you say religion is in your own life? 57% of the respondents answered very important; 26% answered fairly important; 16% not very important, and 1% had no opinion (Gallup, 2006). Concerning a conviction in God's existence, 73% of the respondents were convinced that God exists; 14% said God probably exists; 5% answered a lot of doubt that God exists; 4% responded not sure of God's existence; 3% indicated they do not believe that God exists', and 2% have no opinion about God's existence (Gallup, 2002). A majority of the population profess to have spiritual convictions, so it becomes important for social workers to address this area of the individual's life. (Niederman, 1999)

Religion and spirituality have traditionally been very central in the lives of many African Americans (Billingsley, 1992, 1994; Constantine, Lewis, Conner, & Sanchez, 2000; Hill, 1999a; Lincoln, 1999; Lincoln &

Mamiya, 1990; Wimberly, 1997). Researchers have consistently established that African Americans account for higher levels of reported religious and church involvement than the general population of the United States (Chatters, Taylor, & Lincoln, 1999; Constantine et al., 2000; Levin, Taylor, & Chatters, 1994; Smith, 1997; Taylor et al., 1996). Family therapists, in assessing the strengths and coping skills of African American families, must be sensitive to the roles that religion and spirituality play in the lives of many Black people (Constantine et al., 2000; Wimberly, 1997). In the treatment of African Americans, a lack of awareness can be a serious oversight. Spirituality is an essential and deeply embedded part of the African American psyche (Billingsley, 1992, 1994; Boyd-Franklin & Lockwood, 1999; Hill, 1999a; Knox, 1985).

African American women in particular face a unique experience in this country due to the conflicted interaction of racism, sexism, classism, and other cultural factors that influence identity development. The experiences of African American women include the legacy of slavery and continued discrimination and oppression. They are more likely than White women to suffer from stress related illnesses (hypertension, obesity, diabetes), and

are likely to experience greater morbidity from stress related illnesses (Jackson & Sears, 1992). African American women were forced to develop specific skills for coping with their negative experiences from slavery and their ongoing oppressive experiences. Many of the Afrocentric values and strengths, including role flexibility, extended family relationships, fictive kinship networks, and the importance of spirituality, have served as resources and coping mechanisms (Thomas, 2001). Individuals who fail to meet their spiritual needs tend to feel isolated, depressed, fearful, hopeless, and rigid, symptoms that are present in many therapeutic presenting problems (Fukuyama, 1990). It is essential and imperative, then, that therapists include a discussion of spirituality and religious beliefs in their work with the African American female client.

#### Micro

Spirituality has been acknowledged and included in the area of mental health practice by the addition of "V62.89 Religious or spiritual problem" (p. 685) in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th ed.* (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). The aim was to increase clinicians' sensitivity to spiritual issues in

treatment. The V-Code allows for a non-pathologizing focus on religious and spiritual issues in therapy (Lukoff et al., 1998). Spirituality as a model would offer social workers a viable instrument for assessing the spiritual part of the client's biopscho-social system. According to Aponte, Frankl, Jung, and Rogers (as cited in Niederman, 1999, Significance of the Study section, para. 2)

"practitioners could not only utilize spirituality for assessment, the responses to these deeply personal questions could also serve as a point of departure for therapy". An opportunity may present which would allow for reframing of the client's experiences within the framework of spiritual growth by stating the innate value of personhood and the understanding of life as purposeful and significant (Niederman, 1999).

#### Macro

According to Carroll (as cited in Niederman, 1999, Significance of the Study section, para. 3)

"The Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) Curriculum Policy Statement (1992) recognized religious diversity as an important area for study. In recent years, many social work educators have supported the inclusion of spirituality in professional education". The Joint Commission on



Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) has incorporated policy into its 1994 Accreditation Manual for Hospitals mandating that the spiritual orientation of patients be included in the assessment for all patients receiving care for drug addiction or alcoholism.

The Preamble to the NASW Code of Ethics states, "Social workers are sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social justice" (NASW, 1999, p.1). The Code of Ethics promotes the principle that social workers are to respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person, especially in the areas of diversity (NASW, 1996). The NASW Board of Directors, at its June 2001 meeting accepted the following definition of culture: "The word 'culture' is used because it implies the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group" (Openshaw & Harr, 2005, p.6).

Another example of spirituality in macro social work is The Society for Spirituality and Social Work (SSSW). SSSW was founded in 1990. It was created as a support system for social workers from diverse spiritual

backgrounds. SSSW is dedicated to supporting its members' creative approach to spiritually sensitive social work practice and education. This purpose has been accomplished through national and international conferences, presentations, curriculum interchanges, seminars and publications sponsored or supported by SSSW, in order to promote research, theory development, and best practices in the field (Society for Spirituality and Social Work, 1990).

#### Social Work Roles

What occurs between the client and the social worker involves not only the traditional interventions, methods, and skills the social worker applies, but also a two-way exchange of ideas, feelings, beliefs, and values that may or may not be directly addressed or acknowledged (Sermabeikian, 1994). The practitioner should be willing to incorporate goals in treatment that include spiritual values for the accomplishment of tasks. When deciding what is in the best interests from his or her own perspective, the practitioner should consider spiritual issues.

It is imperative that social work professionals comprehend the values that are the driving forces in their own lives so they can consciously examine the implications

of the value choices clients make and minimize the projection of their own values (Openshaw & Harr, 2005).

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to provide mental health practitioners with a level of awareness that would allow these practitioners to view spirituality as being an integral part of the African American woman's experience, to explore spiritual interventions for the variety of options it brings to social work and to view spiritual intervention techniques as complementary to social work methods.

### Research Design

This research study was exploratory in nature and used a qualitative approach to learn firsthand from the intimate, personal, and subjective experiences of African American women about the importance of spirituality and religiosity in their lives. The study conducted fourteen face-to-face interviews. The interviews were conducted with African American women age twenty-six to fifty-four. The interviews lasted approximately thirty to forty-five minutes. The interviewees included churchgoers and non-churchgoers. The study explored both churchgoers and

non-churchgoers in an effort to inform the practitioners of the influence of spirituality in the everyday lives of African American women who attend religious institutions as well as those who do not. This study included six women who are active churchgoers and eight who do not attend any type of church services.

According to Hodge (2001), "spirituality seems better served by qualitative assessment methods" (p. 204).

Franklin and Jordan study notes (as cited in Hodge, 2001, p. 204) "qualitative approaches tend to be holistic, open ended, individualistic, ideographic and process oriented". Qualitative methods offer particular strengths in evaluating clients' spiritual beliefs, where the wealth of information can be useful in the assessment process Mattaini and Kirk (as cited in Hodge, 2001).

The following are several examples of adaptive questions this researcher asked during the interviews: Is your spirituality a personal strength? If so, why? Are there particular spiritual rituals or practices that help you deal with life's obstacles? These questions and others explored the extent to which spirituality is a significant experience in the lives of African American women. Please see Appendix A, Questionnaire.

The assessment instrument used in this study is an adaptive narrative framework and interpretive framework questionnaire. According to Hodge (2001) "narrative questions incorporate increasing levels of personal revelation, allowing time for the therapist to establish trust and rapport before more intimate information is shared" (p. 207). According to Krill, "establishing this rapport is important because a discussion about spirituality can be an intensely private and sensitive area" (as cited in Hodge, 2001, p. 207).

Hodge (2001) notes:

Interpretive Framework is a multidimensional framework for understanding the personal subjective reality of spirituality in clients' lives. The questions are not sequential but are intended as guides to alert practitioners to the various components of each domain and to create awareness of the potentiality of clients' spirituality (p. 208).

#### Significance of the Project for Social Work

This study is important to social work practice because it will seek to engage practitioners in not only

assessing their clients' bio-psychosocial functioning but it will allow for the workers to give appropriate attention to the clients' religiosity and spiritual needs.

Practitioners will seek to understand the extent to which religion and spirituality are significant in their clients' lives or assess the extent to which religiosity and spirituality may impinge on the problems their clients bring to therapy (Martin & Martin, 2002).

Martin and Martin (2002) further note practitioners may find it helpful to assess both religiosity and spirituality as a potential source of strength and support, and as an intervention resource. By finding out whether their clients pray, attend church, meditate, and/or read scriptures, social workers can find out the effectiveness of these religious and spiritual techniques in solving their clients' problems. They can even find out which technique is most effective with different types of problems and clients.

Spirituality brings to social work a wide variety of change options. It gives social workers intervention techniques with which African American Women are familiar, such as prayer, forgiveness, scripture, reading, religious bibliotherapy, religious storytelling, meditation,

collaboration with spiritual leaders, and the use of clients' religious community as a source of therapy and social support. None of the spiritual intervention techniques supersede the psychodynamic, behavioral, cognitive, humanistic, and ecological-systemic perspectives of social work. They complement, rather than oppose, the various social work methods of intervention (Martin & Martin, 2002). The results of this study will increase awareness and allow for appropriate and effective response to the spiritual needs of the African American woman in the therapeutic process.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

This chapter will discuss literature on a) defining spirituality, b) spirituality and African American women, and c) social work and the use of spirituality when working with African American women. This study will also describe different spiritual interventions that can be integrated into the therapeutic process when working with African American women. This chapter will also include an overview of theoretical development in spiritual well-being.

#### Spirituality Defined

In order to examine spirituality among African American women, the term "spirituality" needs to be defined. Tanyi (2002) notes that the terms "spirituality" and "religion" are used interchangeably. In order to define and clarify the term "spirituality", a distinction between these two terms is warranted. Some authors (LaPierre 1994; Horsburgh 1997; Thoresen 1998; Walsh 1999) agree that religion involves an organized entity, such as an institution with certain rituals, values, practices, and



beliefs about God or a higher power. Religions have definable boundaries and provide guidelines to which individuals adhere (Walsh 1999). It has been argued that the search for meaning and purpose in life is difficult without an individual's adherence to religious practices and beliefs (Cawley 1997; Miller & Thoresen 1999). Although some individuals may express their spirituality through religious values, rituals, and beliefs (Stoll 1989), belonging to a religion does not automatically mean one is or will be spiritual (Long 1997).

Authors acknowledge that spirituality involves an individual's search for meaning, wholeness, peace, individuality, and harmony, (Burkhardt 1989; Fitzgerald 1997; Tloczynski et al. 1997; Walsh 1999; O'Leary 2000). An individual's search for life-meaning is also a biological and integral component of being human (Heyse-Moore 1996; Narayanasamy 1999a; Wright 2000). Spirituality is also described as a way of being, (Macquarrie 1972; Ellison 1983) an energizing force that propels individuals to reach their optimal potential (Goddard 1995, 2000). Spirituality is also a meaningful and extensive way of knowing the world (Dawson 1997), and is expressed through personal mechanisms

such as meditation and music appreciation (Stoll, 1989; Aldridge, 1998).

According to Tanyi (2002) the literature suggests that life-meaning and purpose, connectedness, inner strength, and self-transcendence are important components of spirituality. Self-transcendence is described as reaching beyond personal boundaries and attaining a wider perspective, which facilitates finding meaning in life's experience (Coward 1996). Research studies have shown how self-transcendence, connectedness, belief, inner strength, meaning and purpose in life add to the meaning of spirituality (Tanyi 2002).

Although there are numerous definitions for religion and spirituality, religion and spirituality are not the same, but are related concepts. According to Canda and Carroll (as cited in Hodge, 2001, p. 204) "religion flows from spirituality and expresses an internal subjective reality, an outward expression of one's faith, marked by worship practices, personal beliefs, and ethical codes of behavior". Carroll, Sermakeikian and Spero (as cited in Hodge, 2001, p.204) defined spirituality as a "relationship with God, or whatever is held to be the ultimate (for example, a set of sacred texts for Buddhists) that fosters

a sense of meaning, purpose, and mission in life. In turn, this relationship produces fruit (such as altruism, love, or forgiveness) that has a discernible effect on an individual's relationship to self, nature, others, and the ultimate". Spirituality may be perceived as more existential. One can be spiritual and not religious or vice versa (Bacchus & Holley, 2004).

#### Spirituality and African American Women

The significance of individual and collective spiritual connections among African Americans (Cannon, 1995; Haight, 1998; Morrison & Thornton, 1999) and females (Abrums, 2000; Lauver, 2000; Maloy, 2000) is widely recognized by scholars. Literature has addressed the importance of understanding racism, sexism, racial identity, acculturation, gender role expectations, and socialization experiences when providing culturally sensitive treatment to African American women (Thomas, 2001).

Current literature posits that African American women are historically known for relying on religious and spiritual practices for support (Brown & Gray, 1991; Mattis, 2002). In the social sciences the lives of African

American women are represented as rife with adversity. The singularity of this image, although seriously problematic, has inspired a wealth of research on the coping behaviors and experiences of African American women (Mattis, 2002). That body of research suggests that in their efforts to cope with life's challenges African American women employ myriad strategies including humor, revenge (Aptheker, 1982; Lykes, 1983; Stack, 1974), and the advice of other African American women in their social networks (Myers, 1980; Smyth & Williams, 1991). The most prevalent information about the coping skills of African American women is the idea that spirituality and religion are central to their lives.

African American women utilize structured religious practices and personal spiritual practices (e.g., prayer) to manage the scope of difficulties which include ethnic identity, social status and gender oppression, family and parenting stress, financial stress, illness, psychological distress, and a vast array of daily hassles (Baer, 1993; Brodsky, 2000; Dull & Skokan, 1995; Ellison, 1997; Handal, Black-Lopez, & Moergen, 1989; McAdoo, 1995; Neighbors, Jackson, Bowman, & Gurin, 1983; Neighbors, Musick, & Williams, 1998; Nelson, 1997; Williams, Larson, Buckler, Heckmann, & Pyle, 1991; Woods, Antoni, Ironson, & King,

1999). Regardless of their level of involvement in organized religious life, African American women tend to use prayer as the primary means of coping with hardship (McAdoo, 1995; Neighbors et al., 1998).

Mattis (2002) studied the impact of spirituality and religion on coping experiences in African American women. She found that a crucial part of coping was "turning things over" to a higher power (p.313). McKay (1989) notes spirituality also helped African American women realize their purpose and destiny. Mattis (2002) highlighted the idea that religion helps African American women confront and accept reality, which contradicts traditional scientific perspectives which views spirituality as a means to escape from reality.

#### The Practitioner and the Use of Spirituality with African American Women

According to Miller (as cited in Constantine, Lewis, Conner and Sanchez, 2000, para. 17) "the historical under-representation of spiritual and religious issues in counselor training programs has resulted in a lack of sensitivity about spiritual issues that has been passed from generation to generation of counselors".

A review of the literature highlights the importance of cultural competency among mental health practitioners that come into contact with African American female clients. To be sensitive to the unique historical background and spiritual needs of the Africa American woman, practitioners will need to develop a special cultural competency.

According to the literature, spirituality in social work practice may be disputed by those who are pragmatic, who may ask about its usefulness in helping clients attain basic human needs such as food and shelter. Clients' use of spirituality as a weapon in their coping arsenal is precisely why spirituality must be acknowledged. Strengthening clients' abilities to develop viable strategies to both meet basic needs and maintain mental health is a social work goal. Social workers aid people who are suffering because of a myriad of issues.

Counselors need to be prepared to address these issues with their clients, or counselors will be doing clients a great disservice. It is important for counseling to include spirituality because evidence from research and clinical experience is that the area of spirituality is very important for many people. For example, wellness models

state that spirituality is a part of human development. Individuals who fail to meet spiritual needs tend to feel isolated, depressed, fearful, hopeless, and rigid, symptoms that are present in many therapeutic presenting problems (Fukuyama, 1990). It makes sense for a counselor to work on spiritual issues when these issues emerge and become relevant in counseling. The challenge for the therapist is how to integrate this general cultural knowledge on the importance of spirituality for African Americans (Abernethy, Houston, Mimms, & Boyd-Franklin, 2006).

Further research has found (Constantine, Lewis, Conner, & Sanchez, 2000), that some clients may refrain from discussing spiritual or religious concerns in the realm of a conventional therapeutic process because they are unwilling to participate in therapy with practitioners who do not engage in religious practices. As a consequence, African American clients' awareness of their practitioners' religious standing may influence their outcomes of and experiences with counseling. For example, extremely dedicated religious persons, mainly psychologically susceptible clients, have a tendency to judge their world on the grounds of religious importance. Clients' resistance to bring up such concerns in therapy may in part come from

a fear of having some of their beliefs altered or confronted by practitioners. Therefore, the degree to which social workers support, disprove, or disregard the importance of religion and spiritual standards may place unjust influence on clients who view religion differently. Social workers who view religious and spiritual concerns as beyond their professional area may be grossly restricting their capacity to comprehend the scope of countless numbers of African American clients.

Northcut (1999) suggests that clinicians can create a place for religion and spirituality in therapy. He asserts that using a constructionist framework (i.e., a therapeutic stance where knowledge and experiences are shaped or constructed between client and clinician) can be beneficial in understanding and utilizing clients' spirituality (Bacchus & Holley, 2004). It is imperative that African American female clients and practitioners work collaboratively in making use of spirituality's functions (Boyd-Franklin, 1989; Mattis, 2002).

### Spiritual Interventions

Assessment of the roles of religion and spirituality in work with individuals and communities may provide



information necessary for appropriate interventions and collaborations (Canda & Furman, 1999; Ellor et al., 1999). According to Ellison & Levin, Pargament and Perry (as cited in Hodge, 2001, p.209) "an individual's relationship with the Ultimate is a key strength, facilitating coping, defeating loneliness, promoting a sense of mission and purpose, instilling a sense of personal worth and value, and providing hope for the future".

Social workers will find it helpful to assess both religiosity and spirituality as a potential source of strength, support, and as an intervention resource. In assessing whether clients pray, attend church, meditate, and/or read scriptures, social workers may want to use religious and spiritual techniques in solving their clients' problems. Social workers can even find out which technique is most effective with different types of problems and clients (Martin & Martin, 2000). Rituals have been extensively linked with positive consequences and can help to relieve fear and trepidation, lessen seclusion, support a sense of safety, and create a feeling of appreciation and respect (Hodge, 2001).

In the course of treatment, many African Americans will talk about their use of prayer to cope with life's

challenges (Broman, 1996, Constantine et al., 2000). Broman (1996) found that this was particularly true for African American women, who utilize prayer to deal with health and mental health issues.

A more concrete manifestation of the widespread spiritual orientation in African American families is the central role that the church plays in the lives of a lot of Black people (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990, Lincoln, 1999). Involvement in faith-based organizations is an important strength. This resource has been linked with increased self-fulfillment, reaffirmed individual strength, ability to maintain high moral standards, self-assuredness, appeal, and a feeling of belonging. "Houses of worship (churches, synagogues, mosques, or temples), faith-based groups (Bible studies, Promise Keepers, prayer meetings, elder mentoring gatherings, spirituality groups, or tribal celebrations) are among the more common forms of participation" (Hodge, 2001, p. 209).

The literature has not adequately addressed the importance of exploring spirituality and religious beliefs and practices when examining cultural factors (Fukuyama & Selig, 1999). Due to the importance of spirituality in the African American community, therapists should encourage

clients to explore the spiritual dimensions of the self (Tolliver, 1997).

### Theory Guiding Conceptualization

Several models have been developed to address the needs of African Americans, including African American women. Although it is not within the scope of this study to discuss each theory, the literature has identified four models that are especially noteworthy: (1) The Pathology Model; (2) The Afrocentric Model; (3) The Integrated Feminist and Psychodynamic Model; and (4) The Relational Model.

#### Pathology Model

The Pathology Model focuses on assumptions of maladaptive features of African Americans (Wyche, 1993, p 117). For example, because African Americans are reportedly known to have lower socioeconomic status than European Americans, there is an assumption that the quality of life is not as good as that of European Americans (Wyche, 1993). Practitioners who embrace this model tend to have preconceived ideas and limited expectations of the clientele they serve.

## Afrocentric Model

The Afrocentric Model focuses on life experiences, history, and traditions of African American people (Harris, 1992). The Afrocentric perspective developed because of the exclusion of African ideology in American society. Central to this view is the belief that an individual does not and cannot exist alone, and is part of the overall whole, which includes humans, nature, and the spiritual world, with a collective responsibility for one another (Mbiti, 1970; McNair, 1992). Thus, the goal of individuals, as defined within this philosophy, is to strive to become one with the other beings and creatures in the universe and to make a conscious attempt not to control or change them (White, Parham, & Parham, 1980).

## Integrated Feminist and Psychodynamic Model

The Integrated Feminist and Psychodynamic Model explores the vicissitudes of racial-social and gender role traditions and inner life of African American women (Greene, 1993). The feminist perspective on theory and psychotherapy emphasizes the influence of societal factors on the ways that women have learned to feel powerless in a male-dominated society. Women are encouraged to discover

and further develop personal attributes that were once viewed as weaknesses within a male framework, and develop newly valued strengths that can lead to a greater sense of personal power, self-esteem and efficacy (Taylor, 1999).

### Relational Model

The relational model emphasizes the importance of identifying the role of religion and spirituality in relationships within and across multiple domains of human ecology. It accentuates the need for attention to the affective, cognitive, and behavioral correlates of religious and spiritual experience. Research on religion and spirituality has attended to only a circumscribed range of affective, cognitive, and behavioral variables. Absent from empirical discourse on the religious and spiritual lives of African Americans is an examination of the broad range of emotions, cognitions, and behaviors that are associated with religiosity and spirituality. The relational model will permit the exploration of the ways in which the various correlates of religion and spirituality affect such outcomes as relational quality, commitment, and resilience (Mattis & Jagers, 2001).

## Summary

This chapter defined spirituality and discussed religious/spiritual beliefs and practices among African American women. It also explored the importance of culturally competent practices when working with African American women in the therapeutic process, and spiritual interventions that could be utilized when assessing and addressing the religious/spiritual needs of the African American female client. Finally, the theories related to African American women concluded this chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

#### Introduction

This chapter will cover the design for the study, the sampling methods used, data collection and instruments, and procedures. This chapter also covers protection of human subjects and data analysis.

#### Study Design

The study explored spirituality in the everyday lives of African American women. Participants were encouraged to share information in relation to their respective spiritual practices and beliefs during a semi-structured, one-on-one interview. The interviewer administered the study questionnaire that used a qualitative approach.

According to Lukoff, Turner & Lu (as cited in Hodge, 2001, p. 204), "the most widely used spiritual assessment tools are quantitative measures, or pen and paper questionnaires". Universally, quantitative assessment methods have been criticized as being incongruent with social work values. It seems that spirituality is assessed more satisfactory by qualitative assessment methods (Hodge,

2001). As noted by Franklin and Jordan (as cited in Hodge, 2001, p. 204) "qualitative approaches tend to be holistic, open ended, individualistic, ideographic, and process oriented". In Mattaini and Kirk's study (as cited in Hodge, 2001, p. 205) "qualitative approaches offer particular strengths in assessing clients' spiritual reality, where richness of information can be of particular importance".

The instrument in this study was an adaptive questionnaire of Hodge's narrative and interpretive assessment tool (Hodge, 2001). It was used to maximize participant autonomy by utilizing the design of a spiritual history to provide the interviewer with an interpretive framework for extracting and incorporating the information. As noted by Strickland (as cited in Hodge, 2001, p. 207) "There is a considerable amount of evidence that information is stored and organized narratively in the mind Strickland". Thus, the initial narrative framework offers several general question groupings to obtain an autobiographical spiritual history (Hodge, 2001). According to Krill (as cited in Hodge, 2001, p. 207) "the questions incorporate increasing levels of personal revelation, allowing time to establish trust and rapport before more intimate information is shared—an important concern given



that spirituality can be an intensely private and sensitive area".

According to Hodge (2001):

The Interpretive Framework is a multidimensional framework for understanding the personal subjective reality of spirituality. The questions are not sequential but are intended as guides to highlight the various components of each domain and to create awareness of the potentiality of clients' spirituality. (p. 208)

The Interpretive Framework is intended to bring to mind a number of empirically supported spiritual strengths (Hodge, 2001). Spirituality is a personal matter for a lot of people, and as a result some may be reluctant to investigate it candidly. According to Hodge (2001), "consent should be obtained before proceeding with a spiritual assessment, and the researcher should carefully monitor the client's responses to ensure that the autonomy is respected throughout the assessment" (p. 211).

#### Sampling

The sample for this study included fourteen African American women ages twenty-six to fifty-four. The study

included both churchgoers and non-churchgoers. Four African American female churchgoers from a local church in Victorville, CA. participated in this study. The remaining ten African American women were recruited by word of mouth and through a well-known African American Women's organization also located in Victorville, CA.

Both anticipated samples were chosen to fit the criteria of churchgoers and non-churchgoers. To select the sample of fourteen African American women, two agencies were identified and contacted via site visit, telephone and email.

#### Data Collection and Instruments

The study instrument is an adapted (from Hodge, 2001) 12-item, one-to-one, semi-structured interview. Open-ended questions were designed to explore spirituality as a strength among African American women. Examples of interview questions include:

- How important was spirituality to your family?
- Is your spirituality a personal strength? If so, why?

- What role does your spirituality play in handling life's sorrows?
- Are there particular spiritual rituals or practices that help you deal with life's obstacles?
- What is your level of involvement in faith-based communities?
- How do your beliefs affect your health practices?
- Describe your relationship with God.
- What has been your experience of God?
- Have there been times of deep spiritual intimacy?
- How would God describe you?
- How does your spirituality help you deal with guilt (sin)?
- What roles does forgiveness play in your life?

(Hodge, 2001) Please see Appendix A, Questionnaire.

In collecting these narratives, the researcher was included as an instrument for data collection. As the interviewer, the researcher's use of self was a critical component for developing rapport with the participants and

making them comfortable with sharing valuable information related to their individual practices and beliefs. Through an effective use of self, the researcher was able to engage the participants through active listening, asking open-ended questions, clarifying concepts and terms exclusive to the profession, and employing the use of silence while allowing the participant to elaborate.

### Procedures

In-depth face-to-face 30-45 minute interviews were conducted with fourteen African American women in a private office donated for the purpose of this study. The participants were recruited from two different groups, churchgoers and non-churchgoers. Contact was made with two agencies for recruitment, a local church and a local African American women's organization. Contact was made with Burning Bush Baptist Church (BBBC), a local predominantly African American church in Victorville, CA. Several site visits were made to BBBC in order to begin the engagement process. Site visits were made to ensure a much smoother entry into the actual study. During the first site visit the researcher asked to speak with one of the African American female Elders of the church; permission was

granted. During this site visit the researcher explained the purpose of the study and its design. The researcher received a tentative appointment to return to further describe the study and to talk about recruitment of members. Jackson and Ivanoff (1999) caution that it is difficult to recruit African Americans and other racial/ethnic minorities for research purposes. Moore & Collins (2002) add that both socio-economic factors and racism discourage African Americans from participating in research studies. To recruit effectively and ethically, a researcher needs to respectfully approach potential informants, request time to talk, and inform them about the study and their process of participation without exerting pressure. With African Americans who generally distrust research (due to researchers' behavior in studies such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Study), more caution and sensitivity is warranted during this process (Gibson & Abrams, 2003).

The local Chapter of the National Council of Negro Women was contacted via email. Follow up calls were made to generate continued interest in the study and identify the willingness of the respondents to participate.

All data and participant information, interview questionnaires, and interview notes were locked in a file cabinet in the researcher's office.

### Protection of Human Subjects

To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, any identifying information regarding the participants or their associated agency was excluded for complete confidentiality. An informed consent was provided to each participant. It included a disclaimer informing them that their identity, along with that of the agency, was confidential. The researcher ensured that the informed consent was read, understood and signed before any questioning began. Please see Appendix B, Informed Consent.

At the end of the interview, the researcher provided participants with a debriefing statement, which was read aloud and explained. Participants were informed of how they can obtain study results and provided with the names and numbers of mental health agencies on the debriefing statement, in case they became distressed. Please see Appendix C, Debriefing Statement.

## Data Analysis

The qualitative and exploratory data obtained through this study was analyzed and reported in a variety of ways. The narrative data provided by the participants was grouped based on common themes that emerged from questions. The themes were grouped by context and through analysis of words and statements with similar meaning.

## Summary

This exploratory study used a qualitative measurement method to explore spirituality as a strength among African American women. This chapter discussed the study design, sample from which data was collected, method and instrument used for data collection, data analysis, and procedures taken to protect confidentiality and anonymity for human subjects in this study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

Included in this chapter is a presentation of the results of this research study. The demographic frequencies are presented for the purpose of providing a description of the sample studied. In addition, tables are presented in order to provide a visual description of the data analyses' results and demographic information.

#### Presentation of the Findings

The sample for this study consisted of African American women (n = 14) who resided in Southern California. Approximately 43% of the participants (n = 6) were active churchgoers and 57% of the participants (n = 8) were none-churchgoers. The demographic characteristics of the participants included their age, church attendance, religious affiliation, marital status and years of education (See Table 1). The age of the African American women in this sample ranged from 26-54 years and the mean age for the participants was 41 ½ years. Approximately 29% of the participants (n = 4) were between the ages of 51 and



over; 29% of participants (n = 4) were between the ages of 41 and 50; 21% of the participants (n = 3) were between the ages of 31-40, and 21% of the participants (n = 3) were between the ages of 20-30 years of age.

Of the participants 57%, (n = 8) reported that they did not attend church and 43% of the participants (n = 6) reported that they attended church. Approximately 50% of the participants (n = 3) reported attending church weekly; 30% of the participants (n = 2) reported attending church two times a month, and 20% of the participants (n = 1) reported attending one time per month.

Religious affiliations reported by participants (n = 11) included 36% of the participants (n = 4) identified as Baptists, 36% of the participants (n = 4) identified as Christians, 9% of the participants (n = 1) identified as Protestant, 9% of the participants (n = 1) identified as Seven Day Adventist, and 9% of the participants (n = 1) identified as Science of Mind.

Of the participants, 36% (n = 5) were married; 21% of the participants (n = 3) were divorced, and 43% (n = 6) were single. Concerning educational experience, 71% of the participants (n = 10) reported 12 to 16 years, and 29% of the participants reported 17 to 18 years of education.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age (N = 14)    Mean 41.5%		
20-30	3	21
31-40	3	21
41-50	4	29
51 and over	4	29
Church Attendance (N = 6)		
Weekly	3	50
Two times per month	2	30
One time per month	1	20
Religious Affiliation (N = 11)		
Christians	4	36
Baptists	4	36
Protestant	1	9
Science of Mind	1	9
Seven Day Adventist	1	9
Marital Status (N = 14)		
Married	5	36
Divorced	3	21
Single	6	43
Years of Education (N = 14)		
12 to 16 years	10	71
17 to 18 years	4	28

The researcher asked the participants a number of questions focusing on their spirituality. The questionnaire administered during the interviews consisted of twelve questions. The questions were used to gain insight into the spiritual lives of the participants. Please see Appendix A, Questionnaire.

Participants were asked, "How important was spirituality to your family?" The data set revealed three different responses to how important spirituality was to their families. To simplify interpretation of the data, they were collapsed into two categories (very important and moderately important). Of the participants, 93% (n = 13) reported that spirituality was very important to their families. Most of the women (n=12) stated that they frequently attended church and engaged in church activities with their families of origin when they were growing up. Some of their responses include:

Spirituality is very important to me as well as my family. I was brought up in the church, sung in the choir and was involved in many church activities.

Spirituality is very important to my family. God has always been first in my family. We went to church regularly. I had a strict religious upbringing.

My mother took me to church frequently.

Spirituality is very important to the elders in my family. Spirituality seems to be strong in my grandmother's generation. My grand aunts were deep in church and praying. The women were more in tune with themselves and one another. They all prayed and

believed that there was an entity greater than themselves. They put their worries and fears into God's hands.

Spirituality is very important. We went to church each week and had frequent discussions about spiritual matters.

Participants were asked, "Is spirituality a personal strength?" One hundred percent of the participants ( $n = 14$ ) reported that spirituality was a personal strength. Some of their responses include:

Having strong spiritual beliefs helps me to deal with everyday life... It helps me get through my days and troubled times. It's where I find peace.

I feel that my spirituality is a personal strength because I have something to believe in.... My spirituality keeps me humble and helps me through tough times.

Yes, spirituality is a personal strength. I've been in life or death situations and prayer has brought me out of darkness into light.

Yes, my spirituality is a very personal strength, because it takes me through my everyday life, dealing

with life in general and the people I have to deal with in it.

Yes, spirituality is a personal strength. Because of my faith, when life throws me a curve ball or I am faced with pressing decisions, my strength and the power of the spirit directs me with unwavering guidance.

Yes, my spirituality is a deep personal strength. I feel more spiritual than religious. I don't attend church, but before I do anything, I start my day with prayer, and that gives me strength to make it through. Participants were asked, "What role does spirituality play in handling life sorrows?" The roles identified by the participants were having a personal connection to God, seeking guidance and believing in God's will. Out of these respondents, 5 believed that life sorrows could be handled by having a personal connection to God; 4 of the participants believed that seeking guidance through prayer helps to handle life sorrows, and 3 of the participants believed that having faith in God's will helps to handle life sorrows. Results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Participants' Responses to the Role That Spirituality Plays in Handling Life Sorrows

Personal Connection to God	Seeking Guidance through Prayer	Having Faith in God
<p>Spirituality provides strength that is required to be resilient to life's trials and tribulations. Without spirituality and a personal connection, I may lose myself in sorrow and despair.</p> <p>My connection to spirit helps me to understand life's sorrows. Without my connection with God, I can't make it through my everyday life.</p> <p>I can't handle life's sorrows at all without God.</p> <p>Having my connection with God keeps me strong and feeling comforted during times of sorrow.</p> <p>My spiritual connection brings me hope and meaning in difficult situations. It also gives me courage to face sorrows.</p>	<p>I pray for strength, guidance, and understanding. Then I move forward, knowing that things will work out just fine.</p> <p>Prayer is the answer to dealing with life's sorrows.</p> <p>I look to my spirituality to help me handle life sorrows, by praying and asking for guidance and support.</p> <p>I pray and ask God to breathe on me.</p>	<p>Knowledge and faith in the truth in God's word can set me free from getting stuck in life's sorrows.</p> <p>Believing that all things have a purpose helps me handle life sorrows.</p> <p>My faith provides me with a way to cope.</p>

Participants were asked, "Are there particular spiritual rituals or practices that help you deal with life's obstacles?" The data set revealed 8 different responses to the rituals practiced by the participants when dealing with life's obstacles. Of the responses, 48% (n=10) described prayer as a way to deal with life's obstacles; 14% (n=3) described listening to music as a way to deal with life's obstacles; 8% of the responses (n=2) described reading of biblical scriptures as a way to deal with life's obstacles; 8% of the responses (n=2) described talking to a spiritual friend as a way to deal with life's obstacles; 5% of the responses (n=1) described fasting as a way to deal with life's obstacles; 5% of the responses (n=1) described journaling as a way to deal with life's obstacles; 5% of the responses (n=1) described church attendance as a way to deal with life's obstacles; 5% of the response (n=1) one described crying as a way to deal with life's obstacles. These responses are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Participants' Responses to the Rituals That Help with Life's Obstacles

Variable (N = 21)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Prayer	10	48
Listening to music	3	14
Reading Biblical scriptures	2	8
Talking to a spiritual friend	2	8
Fasting	1	5
Journaling	1	5
Church Attendance	1	5
Crying	1	5

Participants were asked "What is your level of involvement in faith-based communities?" Out of fourteen respondents, four participants reported being involved in auxiliary ministries at their respective churches; three participants identified attending Bible study as a way of being involved in faith-based communities, and seven respondents reported having no involvement in faith-based communities. One woman said, "Spirituality is a personal journey.... I don't feel the need to attend a church." Another woman said, "I don't belong to or attend church but, I attend private in-home Bible study with friends."



Participants were asked, "How does your spiritual beliefs affect your health practices?" Out of fourteen participants, thirteen participants identified having a positive spiritual belief system that helped to sustain good health. One woman stated, "My spiritual beliefs make me emotionally stable and less stressed. It also encourages me to take care of my body." Another woman said, "I believe with all my heart that God will always heal me physically and spiritually when I need Him."

Participants were asked, "Describe your relationship with God." The data set revealed four different descriptions of their relationship with God. Of the participants, seven described their relationship with God as intimate; three participants described their relationship with God as powerful; three participants described their relationship with God as having a confidant, and one participant described her relationship with God as a father and child relationship. One woman said, "Through my personal and intimate relationship, I feel accepted, cherished, listened to and assisted throughout life.... God gives me tremendous meaning and purpose." Another woman said, "He is my friend, my keeper,

my confidant and my shield. As long as I feel Him I'm okay."

The participants were asked, "What have been your experiences with God or Higher Power?" The data set revealed five different responses to how the participants have experienced God. Out of thirteen participants, four described their experience with God as a growth experience. These responses included:

I grow through my connection.... I constantly get opportunities to open myself up more to God.

I have always had good experiences with religion and my experiences with God. I have had prayers answered. My spiritual growth has helped me to realize that God has given me everything I need and watches over me daily.

My experience has been filled with growth. I feel, I'm constantly getting opportunities to open myself to God expressing Himself through me.

Of the participants, three described their experience with God as a healer. One woman said, "I have witnessed God's healing through several of my relatives." Among the participants, three described their experience as feeling God's presence in their daily lives. One woman said, "I

feel His presence everywhere. I see Him in other people. I feel Him in my friends and family. I feel Him in nature; I know He is there. As long as I can feel His presence I'm okay." Another two participants described their experience with God as a decision maker. One woman said, "My experience with God is on a daily basis, for example, decision making and planning activities of daily living." Another participant described experiencing God through forgiveness.

Participants were asked if they had experienced times of deep spiritual intimacy. The data revealed five different responses to ways in which the participants reported experiencing times of deep spiritual intimacy. Out of twelve participants, five participants reported deep spiritual intimacy during low times in their lives. These responses included:

Yes, I've experienced times of deep intimacy.

When I'm feeling extremely down, I begin to pray and I feel like God has come and sat right next to me. I feel so much better afterward.

Yes, during my lowest times I've felt deeply close to God. I view these times as re-birthing experiences and a time for personal growth.

Yes, last year when I was having family stressors, I re-dedicated my life to God. I know He is the one to provide me with the strength to overcome trials and tribulations.

Of note, three participants reported experiencing deep spiritual intimacy during the death of loved ones. Their responses include:

Yes, I've experienced deep spiritual intimacy, when I needed God to let my mom live long enough to allow me to prepare myself and my children for her death.

Yes, I've had a time of deep spiritual intimacy. After the death of my son, I began to lose faith, but with prayer and perseverance, I overcame my struggle.

Yes, when I lost my grandmother and my aunt was ill. I got really close to God through prayer.

An additional three participants reported experiencing deep spiritual intimacy by feeling the warmth and presence of God in their daily lives. One woman said, "Yes, during times of prayer, fasting and worship, I can feel the presence of the Holy Spirit bringing comfort and understanding to my life." Another woman said, "Yes, there have been times where I felt the warmth and great presence

of God and it always fills me with peace." One participant reported experiencing deep spiritual intimacy while giving birth to her son.

Participants were asked, "How would God or a Higher Power describe you?" The data set revealed five different descriptions of how God would describe the participants. Out of nine participants, three participants reported that God would describe them as a child of His; three participants reported that God would describe them as loving; two participants reported that God would describe them as stubborn, and one participant reported that God would describe her as inconsistent. These responses included:

God would describe me as a very loving and God fearing Christian.

God would say I'm His special child, whom He is most pleased with.

God would describe me as a child of His who is in need of nurturing and teaching. He would think He has created a caring and sensitive being.

God would describe me as stubborn.

Participants were asked, "How does spirituality helps you to deal with guilt or sin?" Out of ten participants,

all identified God's forgiveness as a way to deal with sin or guilt.

Participants were asked, "What role does forgiveness play in your life?" Out of fourteen participants described all forgiveness as an active occurrence in their daily lives. Some of those responses include:

Though forgiveness is always difficult, it makes it easier and more humbling for me to do knowing that I am forgiven by my Father in heaven, no matter what. I believe He will forgive us for anything as long as we ask for it. There is nothing He won't forgive us for. I am not afraid because I know that no matter how much I sin He will forgive me.

Forgiveness brings forth healing and restoration to relationships in my life.

I ask for God's forgiveness if I do something wrong.

Forgiveness plays a big role in my life. I believe I am a very forgiving person as well as non-judgmental and because of that, I believe God will continue to bless me.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

The primary objective of this study was to provide mental health practitioners with a level of awareness that would allow these practitioners to view spirituality as being an important aspect of the African American woman's experience. The findings are interpreted. In addition, the limitations of this study are addressed, as well as recommendations for further research and practice.

#### Discussion

What do African American women's narratives help us to understand about the firsthand intimate, personal, and subjective religious and spiritual experiences in their daily lives? The findings of this study indicate how African American women make use of religion and spirituality in their daily lives; spirituality is very important to African American families. Spirituality is a personal strength, and there are rituals and/or practices that help to strengthen African American women's spirituality. This study examines intimate relationships

and experiences with God/Higher Power and the influence it has had in African American women's lives, and notes the insignificance of being a churchgoer versus a non-churchgoer as it relates to being spiritual. The responses do not suggest a hierarchy through which individuals must journey in an effort to state the importance of spirituality to their lives. Instead, they offer guidance to the practitioner to the variety of aspects of each area and generate an awareness of the value of spirituality to African American women (Hodge, 2001).

The participants revealed a number of important aspects of religiosity and spirituality in their daily lives. First, the participants in this study revealed that spirituality had been very important to their family of origin. The participants reported their upbringing as the impetus for sustained belief in God through adulthood. Many of the participants' upbringing included church attendance and prayer. Consistent with the literature a concrete manifestation of the widespread spiritual orientation in African American families is the central role that the church occupies in the lives of a lot Black people (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990, Lincoln, 1999).



Also consistent with the literature is the resource that churches provide. Churches have been associated with increased empowerment, realization of personal strengths, coping ability, self-confidence, lovability, and a sense of belonging (Hodge, 2001). Although 57% of the participants in this study report no current church attendance, they have continued to maintain a strong belief in God through prayer, meditation, journaling, fasting and listening to music. The participants reported that the above rituals help them to feel supported, encouraged and they feel guided by the presence of God in their lives.

Second, the findings reveal that spirituality is a personal strength. Participants suggested that having faith enables them to deal with adversity and inspires hope that all things will work out by having faith. The idea of spirituality being a source of strength reflects how Ellison et al., (as cited in Hodge, 2001, p. 209) describe an individual's relationship with God as "a key strength, facilitating coping, defeating loneliness, promoting a sense of mission and purpose, instilling a sense of personal worth and value, and providing hope for the future". Thus, social workers will find it helpful to assess both religiosity and spirituality as a potential

source of strength and support as they explore interventions to use with African American women.

Third, the participants' intimate relationships and experiences with God can reveal to the researcher and practitioner the importance of rituals and religious practices that assist in strengthening and sustaining those relationships and experiences. Participants revealed that prayer is a highly effective way to seek acceptance, peace and encouragement. Consistent with the literature, many African Americans in the course of treatment will talk about their use of prayer to cope with life's challenges, which is particularly true for African American women who use prayer to cope with health and mental health issues. According to Ellison et al, "rituals have been widely associated with positive outcomes and can serve to ease anxiety and dread, alleviate isolation, promote a sense of security, and establish a sense of being loved and appreciated" (as cited in Hodge, 2001, p. 209)).

Fourth, the participants in this study were churchgoers and non-churchgoers. This study revealed that churchgoers and non-churchgoers both perceived God as being very important to their lives and as a strength that helps them to deal with life's adversities. Current literature

posits that African American women are historically known for relying on religious and spiritual practices for support (Brown & Gray, 1991; Mattis, 2002). African American women use formal religious involvement and private devotional practices (e.g., prayer) to negotiate a range of adversities.

Although the literature posits that participation in faith-based organizations is a noteworthy strength, more consistent findings note that regardless of their level of involvement in organized religious life, African American women tend to use prayer as the primary means of coping (McAdoo, 1995; Neighbors et al., 1998).

Finally, consistent with the work of Miller and Striver (1998), the inner sense of connection to God is central to healing and growth outcomes. The participants' narratives highlighted in this study have illuminated the deep inner connections that they share with God, have demonstrated how these connections are sustained, and have shown how African American women's connection to God has helped to inform their ability to make positive decisions and cope with life's challenges.

## Limitations

Several study limitations are noteworthy to consider. First, access to churchgoers was problematic. As a researcher and outsider to the church community, it did not appear that the church community viewed the gathering of data for this study as a priority. There was an intense effort on the researcher's part to become involved in the church community in order to create trust and a sense of importance among the potential participants for this study. Secondly, the interviews were somewhat brief, ranging from 30-45 minutes. The time limit placed on the interviews often prohibited further probing and clarifying.

## Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

The results of this study revealed that spirituality is very important and is a great strength among African American women. This study also revealed that African American women's spirituality is sustained through family tradition, practiced rituals and, deep and intimate experiences and relationships with God.

Spirituality brings to social work practice a wide variety of change options. It gives social workers

intervention techniques with which African American women are familiar, such as prayer, forgiveness, scripture reading, meditation and the use of clients' religious community as a source of therapy and social support (Martin & Martin, 2002). Practitioners will also be able to have their clients express in narratives their spiritual strengths as a valuable technique in the therapeutic process. It is important that practitioners not judge clients' spiritual connection by the frequency of church attendance. This study reveals that non-churchgoers possess a strong relationship to God through prayer and private devotion; thus, they feel empowered and encouraged in their daily lives.

It is important that the practitioners engage in spiritually competent practice. For example, some people perceive church attendance as a way to measure spiritual and religious beliefs. It is important that practitioners understand that church attendance (frequency) does not determine the extent to which one is spiritual. Church attendance is illustrative of religious affiliation, fellowship and the organized manner in which one may practice spirituality.

With the clients' permission practitioners should explore their clients' spirituality by conducting a mini spiritual assessment. This study revealed that non-churchgoers' spirituality is not predicated on religious affiliation, but determined by individuals' belief systems and the rituals and practices that support their beliefs.

The Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Work (NASW) (1999) lists standards that clearly mention religion as a category that social workers should work toward exhibiting sensitivity. If helping professionals hold biased understandings of clients' spiritual beliefs and values in these areas, this bias can damage the client/practitioner relationship (Koenig, 1998).

Findings from this study support the claim that spirituality is important in the daily lives of African American women whether they attend church or not. Future research is needed in the areas of assessing spiritual intervention techniques as being complementary to social work practice, and additional research studies are needed to explore spirituality in the daily lives of multicultural groups in an effort to sustain awareness and to encourage spiritually sensitive social work practice.

## Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to provide mental health practitioners with a level of awareness that would allow them to view spirituality as being an integral part of African American women's experiences. The study used a qualitative approach to learn firsthand from the intimate, personal and subjective experiences of African American women about the importance of spirituality and religiosity in their lives. This study revealed that religion/spirituality is very important to African American women and their families. The study also revealed spirituality as a strength that empowers and uplifts African American women. Through rituals and practices these African American women continue to strengthen their spiritual connections and experience God on very intimate levels. Interestingly, the participants described many of the same rituals and practices as the current scholarly research. Participants, both churchgoers and non-churchgoers perceived prayer as an important ritual that guides and supports their daily lives.

Social workers should acknowledge when clients, especially African American women, bring up the subject of God/Higher Power in the therapeutic process. Social workers

should be willing to assess the strengths and coping skills of African American women and be sensitive to the role that spirituality and religion plays.



APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRE

## Questionnaire

### **Interpretive**

1. How important was spirituality to your family?
2. Is your spirituality a personal strength? If so why?

### **Narrative**

3. What role does your spirituality play in handling life's sorrows?
4. Are there particular spiritual rituals or practices that help you deal with life's obstacles?
5. What is your level of involvement in faith-based communities?
6. How does your beliefs affect your health practices?
7. Describe your relationship with God.
8. What has been your experience of God?
9. Have there been times of deep spiritual intimacy?
10. How would God describe you?
11. How does your spirituality help you deal with guilt (sin)?
12. What roles does forgiveness play in your life?

APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT

## **INFORMED CONSENT**

### **SPIRITUALITY IN THE DAILY LIVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN**

This study in which you are being asked to participate in is designed to explore the importance of spirituality in the daily lives of African American women. This study is being conducted by Denise E. Holmes under the supervision of Dr. Herbert Shon, assistant professor of social work at California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board Social Work Subcommittee, California State University, San Bernardino.

In this study you will be asked to respond to questions regarding your spirituality and the significance it has in your everyday life. The face to face interview is expected to take 30-45 minutes to complete. All of your responses will be held in the strictest of confidence by the researcher. Your name will not be reported with your responses. You may receive the results of this study upon completion after September 2007 at the following location: Pfau Library, California State University, San Bernardino.

Your participation in this study is totally voluntary. You are free not to answer any questions and withdraw at any time during this study without penalty. When your interview is completed, you will receive a debriefing statement describing the study in more detail. In order to ensure the validity of the study, we ask that you not discuss this study with other participants.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts from your participation in this study. However, the benefit of your participation will be the continued dialogue regarding the importance of African American women's spirituality among my peers and those who read the results of this study.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Herbert Shon (909) 537-5532

- ☐ By checking this box, you acknowledge that you have been informed of your rights and agree to participate voluntarily and are at least 18 years of age.

APPENDIX C  
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

## **DEBRIEFING STATEMENT**

### **Spiritual Well-Being in the Daily Lives Of African American Women**

This study you have just completed was designed to explore the Spiritual lives of African American women. In this study, the researcher explored the role that Spirituality plays in the everyday lives of African American women. The questions were designed to develop an autobiographical spiritual history and to create awareness of the significance of spirituality in the everyday lives of African American women.

Thank you for your participation and for not discussing the contents of the interview with other participants. If you find that this study has distressed you in any way please feel free to contact one of the following agencies for counseling:

San Bernardino County Mental Health  
11951 Hesperia, Hesperia, CA  
(760) 956-6780

Oasis Counseling Center  
15447 Anacapa Rd, Victorville, CA  
(760) 946-2070

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Denise E. Holmes or Dr. Herbert Shon at (909)537-5532. If you would like to obtain a copy of the results of this study, please contact the Pfau library, California State University, San Bernardino

APPENDIX D  
DEMOGRAPHICS

## Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Age (N = 14) Mean 41.5%</b>		
20-30	3	21.4%
31-40	3	21.4%
41-50	4	28.6%
51 and over	4	28.6%
<b>Church Attendance (N = 14)</b>		
Weekly	3	21.4%
Two times per month	2	7.1%
One time per month	1	7.1%
Six times per year	1	7.1%
<b>Religious Affiliation (N = 11)</b>		
Christians	4	36.4%
Baptists	4	36.4%
Protestant	1	9.1%
Science of Mind	1	9.1%
Seven Day Adventist	1	9.1%
<b>Marital Status (N = 14)</b>		
Married	5	35.7%
divorced	3	21.4%
Single	6	42.9
<b>Years of Education (N = 14)</b>		
12 to 16 years	10	71.4%
17 to 18 years	4	28.6%



## REFERENCES

- Abernethey, A.D., Mimms, T., & Boyd-Franklin, N. (2006).  
Using Prayer in Psychotherapy: Applying Sue's  
Differential to Enhance Culturally Competent Care.  
*Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*,  
12(1), 101-114.
- Abrums, M. (2000). Jesus will fix it after a while:  
Meanings and Health. *Social Service & Medicine*, 50,  
189-105.
- Aldridge, D. (1998). Life as jazz: hope, meaning, and music  
therapy in the treatment of life-threatening illness.  
*Advances in Mind-Body Medicine*, 14, 271-282.
- American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and  
statistical manual of mental disorders*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed.  
Washington, DC: Author.
- Aptheker, B. (1982). *Woman's legacy: Essays on race, sex  
and class in American history*. Amherst, MA: University  
of Massachusetts Press.
- Arizona State University, College of Public Programs, The  
Society for Spirituality and Social Work (1990).  
Retrieved October 5, 2006, from  
<http://ssw.asu.edu/spirituality/ssw/>

- Bacchus, D.N., & Holley, L.C. (2004). Spirituality as a Coping Resource: The Experiences of Professional Black Women. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work, 13*(4), 65-84.
- Baer, H. (1993). The limited empowerment of women in Black spiritual churches: An alternative vehicle to religious leadership. *Sociology of Religion, 54*, 65-82.
- Billingsley, A. (1992). *Climbing Jacob's ladder: The enduring legacy of African American families*. New York: Touchstone Books.
- Billingsley, A. (1994). The Black church. *National Journal of Sociology, 8*(1-2).
- Boyd-Franklin, N. (1989). *Black Families in therapy: A multisystems approach*. New York: Guilford.
- Boyd-Franklin, N. (2003). *Black Families in therapy: Understanding the African American experience*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Boyd-Franklin, N., & Lockwood, T.W. (1999). Spirituality and religion: Implications for psychotherapy with African American clients and families. In F. Walsh (Ed.), *Spiritual resources in family therapy* (pp. 90-103). New York: Guilford Press.

- Brodsky, A. (2000). The role of religion in the lives of resilient, urban, African American single mothers. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 28, 199-219.
- Broman, C.L. (1996). Coping with personal problems. In H.W. Neighbors & J.S. Jackson (Eds.), *Mental health in Black America* (pp. 117-129). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Brown, D.R., & Gray, L.E. (1991). Religious Socialization and Educational Attainment Among African Americans: An Empirical Assessment. *Journal of Negro Education*, 60(3), 411-426.
- Burkhardt, M.A. (1989). Spirituality: An analysis of the concept. *Holistic Nursing Practice*, 3, 69-77.
- Canda, E.R., & Furman, L.D. (1999). *Spiritual diversity in social work practice: The heart of helping*. New York: Free Press.
- Cannon, K. (1995). Surviving the blight. In G. Wade-Gayles (Ed.), *My Soul is a witness: African American women's spirituality*, (pp. 19-26). Boston: Beacon Press.
- Cawley, N. (1997). An Exploration of the concept of spirituality. *International Journal of Palliative Nursing*, 3, 31-36.

- Chatters, L.M., Taylor, R.J., & Lincoln, K.D. (1999). African American religious participation: A multi-sample comparison. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 38, 132-145.
- Constantine, M.G., et al., (2000). Addressing spiritual And religious issues in counseling African Americans: Implications for counselor training and practice. *Counseling and Values*, 45(1), 28-39.
- Coward, D.D. (1996). Self-transcendence and correlates in a healthy population. *Nursing Research*, 45, 116-121.
- Dawson, P.J. (1997). A reply to Goddard's spirituality as integrative energy. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 25, 282-289.
- Dull, V., & Skokan, L. (1995). A cognitive model of religion's influence on health. *Journal of Social Issues*, 51(2), 49-64.
- Ellison, C. (1983). Spiritual well-being: conceptualization and measurement. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 11, 330-340.
- Ellison, C. (1997). Religious involvement and the subjective quality of life among African Americans. In R. Taylor, J. Jackson, & L. Chatters (Eds.), *Family*

*life in Black America* (pp.117-131). Thousand Oaks, CA:  
Sage Publications.

Ellor, J.W., Netting, F.E., & Thibault, J.M. (1999).

*Religious and spiritual aspects of human service  
practice*. Columbia: University of South Carolina  
Press.

Fitzgerald, J. (1997). Reclaiming the whole: self, spirit,  
and society. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 19,  
407-413.

Fukuyama, M. (1990). Multicultural and spiritual issues In  
counseling, Workshop presented at the American  
Association for Counseling and Development Annual  
Conference, Cincinnati, OH.

Fukuyama, M., & Selig, T. (1999). *Integrating spirituality  
into multicultural counseling*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Gallup Poll, public opinion 2002. Religion. Retrieved  
October 2, 2006, from  
<http://www.galluppoll.com/religion/>

Gallup Poll, public opinion 2006. Religion. Retrieved  
October 2, 2006, from  
<http://www.galluppoll.com/religion/>

- Gibson, P. & Abrams, L. (2003). Racial Difference in Engaging, Recruiting, and Interviewing African American Women in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Social Work*, 2(4), 457-476.
- Goddard, N.C. (1995). Spirituality as integrative energy: a philosophical analysis as requisite precursor to holistic nursing practice. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 22, 808-815.
- Goddard, N.C. (2000). A Response to Dawson's critical analysis of 'spirituality' as integrative energy. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 31, 968-979.
- Greene, B. (1993). Psychotherapy with African American women: Integrating feminist and psychodynamic models. *The Journal of Training and Practice in Professional Psychology*, 7(1), 49-66.
- Haight, W. (1998). Gathering the Spirit at First Baptist Church: Spirituality as a protective factor in the lives of African American children. *Social Work: Journal of National Association of Social Work*, 43(3), 213-221.
- Handal, P., Black-Lopez, W., & Moergen, S. (1989). Preliminary investigation of the relationship between

religion and psychological distress in Black women.

*Psychological Reports*, 65, 971-975.

Harris, D.J. (1992). A Cultural model for assessing the growth and development of the African American female.

*Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 20, 158-167.

Hartman, A., (1993). Diagrammatic assessment of family relationships. *Families in Society*, 76, 111-122.

Heyse-Moore, L.H. (1996). On spiritual pain in the dying.

*Morality*, 1, 297-319.

Hill, R. (1999a). *The strengths of African American families: Twenty-five years later*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Hodge, D.R. (2001). Spiritual assessment: A review of major qualitative methods and a new framework for assessing spirituality. *Social Work*, 46, 203-214.

Horsburgh, M. (1997). Towards an inclusive spirituality: wholeness, interdependence and waiting. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 19, 398-406.

Jackson, A. P., & Ivanoff, A. (1999). Reduction of Low Response Rates in Interview Surveys of Poor African American Families. *Journal of Social Work Service Research*, 25(1-2), 41-60.

- Jackson, A.P., & Sears, S.J. (1992). Implications of an Afrocentric worldview in reducing stress for African American women. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 71, 184-190.
- Knox, D.H. (1985). Spirituality: A tool in the assessment and treatment of Black alcoholics and their families. *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly*, 2(3-4), 31-44.
- LaPierre, L. (1994). A model for describing spirituality. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 33, 153-161.
- Lauver, D. (2000). Commonalities in women's spirituality and women's health. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 22(3), 76-88.
- Levin, J.S., Taylor, R.J., & Chatters, L.M. (1994). Race and gender differences in religiosity among older adults: Findings from four national surveys. *Journal Of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, 49(3), 137-S145.
- Lincoln, C.E. (1999). *Race, religion, and the continuing American dilemma*. New York: Hill & Wang.
- Lincoln, C.E., & Mamiya, L.H. (1990). *The Black church in the African American experience*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Long, A. (1997). Nursing: a spiritual perspective. *Nursing Ethics*, 4, 486-510.



- Lukoff, D., Lu, F. & Turner, R. (1998). From spiritual problem: The transpersonal roots of the new DSM-IV category. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 38, 21-50.
- Lykes, M. (1983). Discrimination and coping in the lives of Black women: Analysis of oral history data. *Journal of Social Issues*, 39(3), 79-100.
- Macquarrie, J. (1972). *Paths in spirituality*. Harper & Row, Publishers, New York.
- Maloy, M. (2000). Spiritual approaches. In E. Olshansky (Ed.), *Integrated women's health: Holistic approaches for comprehensive care* (pp. 300-319). Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen.
- Martin, E.P. & Martin, J.M. (2002). *Social work and the Black experience*. Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Mattis, J.S. (2000). African American women's definitions of spirituality and religiosity. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 26, 101-122.
- Mattis, J.S. (2002). Religion and spirituality in the meaning-making and coping experiences of African American women: A qualitative analysis. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 26, 309-321.

- Mattis, J.S., & Jagers, R. (2001). A relational framework for the study of religiosity and spirituality in the lives of African Americans. *Journal Of Community Psychology*, 29(5), 519-539.
- Mbiti, J. (1970). *African religious and philosophies*. Garden City, NY: Anchor, Doubleday.
- McAdoo, H. (1995). Stress levels, family help patterns, and religiosity in middle-and working class African American single mothers. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 21, 424-449.
- McNair, L.D. (1992). African-American women in therapy: An Afrocentric and feminist synthesis. *Women and Therapy*, 12, 5-19.
- Miller, W.R. & Thoresen, C.E. (1999). Spirituality and health. In W. R. Miller (Eds.), *Integrating Spirituality Into Treatment Resources for Practitioners* (pp.3-18). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Moore, S.E. & Collins, W.L. (2002). African-Americans and Clinical Trials Research: Recommendations for Client Engagement, *Advances in Social Work* 3(1) 46-59.

- Morrison, E.F., & Thornton, K.A. (1999). Influence of Southern Spiritual beliefs on perceptions of mental illness. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 20, 1-16.
- Myers, L. (1980). *Black women: Do they cope better?* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Narayanasamy, A. (1999a). A review of spirituality as applied to nursing. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 36, 117-125.
- National Association of Social Workers. (1999). *Code of Ethics*. Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Neighbors, H., Jackson, J., Bowman, P., & Gurin, G. (1983). *Stress, coping, and Black mental health: Preliminary findings from a national study*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Neighbors, H., Musick, M., & Williams D. (1998). The African American minister as a source of help for serious personal crises: Bridge or barrier to mental health care? *Health Education & Behavior: Special Issue: Public Health and Health Education in Faith Communities*, 25, 759-777.
- Nelson, T. (1997). He made a way out of no way: Religious experience in an African American congregation. *Review of Religious Research*, 39, 5-26.

- Niederman, R. (1999). The Conceptualization of a Model of Spirituality. Retrieved October 15, 2006, from <http://www.geocities.com/randynied/home.html>
- Northcut, T.B. (1999). Constructing a place for religion and spirituality in psychodynamic practice. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 28(2), 155-169.
- O'Leary, J. (2000). The spiritual challenge of health care. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 31, 988.
- Openshaw, L., & Harr, C. (2005). Ethical Issues in Spiritual Assessment. Retrieved October 15, 2006, from <http://www.nacsw.org/Publications/Proceedings2005/OpenshawHarrEthicsSpiritual%20Assessment>.
- Sermabeikian, P. (1994). Our clients, ourselves: The spiritual perspective and social work practice. *Social Work*, 39(2), 178-183.
- Smith, A. (1997). *Navigating the deep river: Spirituality in African American families*. Cleveland, OH: United Church Press.
- Smyth, K., & Williams, P. (1991). Patterns of coping in Black working women. *Behavioral Medicine, Spring*, 40-46.

- Society for Spirituality and Social Work. (1990). Retrieved October 18, 2006 from the World Wide Web:  
<http://ssw.asu.edu/spirituality/ssw/>
- Stack, C. (1974). *All our kin: Strategies for survival in a Black community*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Stoll, R.I. (1989). The essence of spirituality. In V. B. Carson (Eds.), *Spiritual dimensions of nursing practice* (pp. 4-23). Philadelphia, Penn: W.B. Saunders Co.
- Tanyi, R.A. (2002). Towards clarification of the meaning of spirituality. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 39(5), 500-509.
- Taylor, R.J. (1999). Changing what has gone before: The enhancement of an inadequate psychology through the use of an Afrocentric-Feminist perspective with African American women in therapy. *Psychotherapy*, 36(2), 170-179.
- Taylor, R.J., Chatters, L.M., Jaya, R., & Levin, J.S. (1996). Black and White differences in religious participation: A multisample comparison. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 35, 403-410.

- Thomas, A. (2001). African American women's spiritual beliefs: A Guide for Treatment. *Women & Therapy*, 23(4), 1 -12.
- Thoresen, C.E. (1998). Spirituality, health, and science. The coming revival? In S. Roth-Roemer, S.E.R, Kurpius & C.N. Carmin (Eds.), *In the emerging role of counseling psychology in health care* (pp. 409-431). New York: W.W. Norton.
- Tloczynski, J., Knoll, C. & Fitch, A. (1997). The relationship among spirituality, religious ideology, and personality. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 25, 208-213.
- Tolliver, W.F. (1997). Invoking the spirit: A model for incorporating the spiritual dimension of human functioning into Social Work Practice. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 67, 477-486.
- Walsh, F. (1999). Religion and spirituality: Wellspring for healing and resilience. In F. Walsh (Eds.), *Spiritual resources in Family Therapy* (3-27). New York: Guilford.

- White, J.L., Parham, W.D., & Parham, T.A. (1980). Black psychology: The Afro-American tradition as a unifying force for traditional psychology. In R.L. Jones (Eds.), *Black Psychology* (pp. 56-66). New York: Harper & Row.
- Williams, D., Larson, D., Buckler, R., Heckmann, R. & Pyle, C. (1991). Religion and psychological distress in a community sample. *Social Science and Medicine* 32, 1257-1262.
- Wimberly, E.P. (1997). *Counseling African American marriages and families*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Wright, S. (2000). Life, the universe and you. *Nursing Standard*, 14, 23.
- Wyche, K.F. (1993). Psychology and African American women: Findings from applied research. *Applied and Preventive Psychology*, 2, 115-121.